The Village

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Issue #246 July/August 2024

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

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TheVillage Issue 246 Jul/Aug 2024

inside

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The Village (ISSN 1466-3376) is published by Platform Publishing & Media Ltd (Reg Office: 87 Hewell Rd, Barnt Green, B45 8NL) and printed by Buxton Press in Derbyshire.

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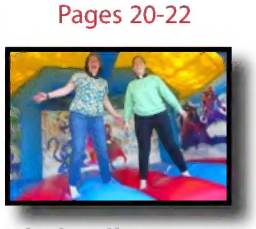

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Front cover: A bee on Gaillardia, taken by Michael Corfield, of Rowney Green.

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Bees in belfry create a buzz

THERE WAS more than a peal of bells coming from the tower of a village church after a colony of bees took up residence.

As St Laurence, Alvechurch, bellringer Geoff Franklin told *The Village*: "There was no immediate danger, but with remedial work being planned on the stonework, the masons didn't need to have to work around the bees."

So they called in Greg Hunt, who keeps an apiary at Fruitfields orchard in Barnt Green. He lowered a trap hive down the outside of the tower (main picture), then returned a week later to find bees had moved in and were already collecting honey (right).

Blue is still the colour

NOW THE General Election dust has settled, the people of this area continue to be represented at Westminster by a Conservative MP.

Amid vast swings away from the Tories as Labour swept to power nationally, the Bromsgrove seat vacated by Sajid Javid was won by Bradley Thomas, former Conservative leader of neighbouring Wychavon Council.

Unlike recent General Elections for Bromsgrove, the result was not a foregone conclusion, but Mr Thomas still emerged more than 3,000 votes clear of the Labour candidate, Neena Gill, by 16,533 to her 13,517.

There were many other issues clouding the likely result in Bromsgrove besides the national anti-Tory sentiment, most notably the entry of a Reform UK candidate into the fray, with Glen Brampton taking 9,584 votes.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrat candidate, David Nicholl, increased his party's share and took a sizeable chunk of the total vote, with 7,391.

Villagers will, however, never know the outcome had the regional Labour Party chosen Bromsgrove District Council's chairwoman, Sam Ammar,

Different outcomes: Coun Sam Ammar (left) and new MP Bradley Thomas.

who had also been the chair of the Labour Party in Bromsgrove, to run as their candidate.

Complaining that Labour had "parachuted in an unknown candidate from Ealing" Coun Ammar resigned from Labour to run as an independent. She attracted 1,561 votes, while highlighting the fact Labour's candidate was from London.

The Green candidate, Talia Elli, received 1,675 votes and Aheesha Zahir, of the Workers Party, 144.

After the result, Mr Thomas, who was born and raised in Worcestershire, told *The Village*: "I'm honoured and humbled to have been elected as the MP for Bromsgrove in the county that has always been my home.

"Having met so many local people, organisations and businesses over the last few months has ensured that as your newly elected MP, I have a clear understanding of local priorities and I look forward to commencing my work.

"This includes being Bromsgrove's ambassador in Westminster, holding the government to account and pushing for investment to ensure that our area remains a great place to live, work and visit," he added.

"I will also use my voice as your MP to champion topics and issues that affect all of us and to play my role in scrutinising legislation to ensure that it is in both our local and national interest."

ONE IMMEDIATE concern for the new MP to address will be the threat to the Green Belt that has protected our surrounding countryside for half a century.

The new Labour Government is likely to reintroduce mandatory home-building targets and dent Green Belt protection, with sites for "new towns" set to be announced by the end of the year.

Initiative aims to kick-start village centre

A NEW PARTNERSHIP is being formed to help to invigorate business in a village centre facing a number of challenges.

The Alvechurch Business Partnership, backed by Bromsgrove District Council, has formed a steering group and is preparing to consult with village businesses and other interests.

Its main aim is to "improve and raise the profile of Alvechurch by making it an attractive, accessible safer and better place to live, visit, shop and do business".

Among the priorities are to:

- Create a village that is accessible and an attractive place to live;
- Create a safe and secure environment for all users;
- Enhance the profile of Alvechurch and promote individual businesses through a concentrated PR and Marketing campaign;
- Support businesses through representing their interests and lobbying on issues that matter to trade so they can operate to their full potential;
- Encourage and assist startup businesses within Alvechurch.

One area of particular urgency is parking. The largest car park in the village centre at the Alvechurch Inn is set to be reduced to a 30-minute limit from November, regardless of whether the application to create a 28-bed hotel on that site is approved.

A member of the steering group told *The Village*: "Alvechurch is a fantastic rural hub in which to live, but it needs local businesses to thrive. It has lost its post office and bakery and now both of its butchers are gone and the shops are sitting empty.

A MOVING commemoration of the 80th anniversary of D-Day at Alvechurch Cricket Club culminated in the lighting of a beacon.

The torch basket was made for the event by Gordon Brady, aged 77, and Bob Dunn, aged 80, with help from Gordon's son Adam.

With military backgrounds, Gordon (above, left) and Adam (right) joined organiser Brett Shepherd in front of the beacon for the picture after the beacon was lit by Gordon.

"Ensuring these remain as business premises, bringing services and life to the village centre, would be the sorts of successes the new partnership would like to help to achieve."

A business survey has been prepared by the steering group and is due to be circulated by the end of August.

Anyone wanting to provide details to receive the survey or seeking further information can contact Coun Alan or Rachael Bailes on: a.bailes@bromsgrove.gov.uk

Parking pass plea

STREET-PARKING by commuters avoiding charges at Barnt Green station is clogging roads around the village centre, Barnt Green Parish Council.

A resident asked if it would be possible to introduce a two-hour waiting limit, with parking permits issued to residents.

Parish chairman Robert Cholmondeley said that while permits seemed a good idea, they would backfire on residents because there would then be nowhere for visitors to park.

Lifts update

A DROP-IN session has been organised for villagers to hear progress on the installation of long-awaited lifts between platforms at Barnt Green railway station.

Network Rail representatives are fulfilling a pledge made at a public meeting earlier in the year. The drop-in session runs from 7-9pm at Friends Meeting House, Sandhills Road, on Monday August 5.

Inn decision

A DECISION on plans for a 28-bed budget hotel in the Alvechurch Conservation Area was due to be made as *The Village* went to press.

More than 130 objections had been made to the planning authority over the application to extend The Alvechurch Inn, a pub on the site of the former sports & social club.

The site had for a number of years been listed as an Asset of Community Value, which would have meant any sale of the building would have had to be offered to the community first. But this status lapsed and the site was sold to the current owner before an application was made to have it relisted.

Alvechurch Parish Council objected to the hotel plans and was among those expected to speak against them at the Bromsgrove planning committee meeting on July 9.

AN ARMY officer from Barnt Green has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in the King's Birthday Honours, marking almost 25 years' distinguished service

Warrant Officer Danny Bromage (pictured above meeting King Charles), of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, said he was shocked to receive the call, adding: "I never imagined receiving such an honour."

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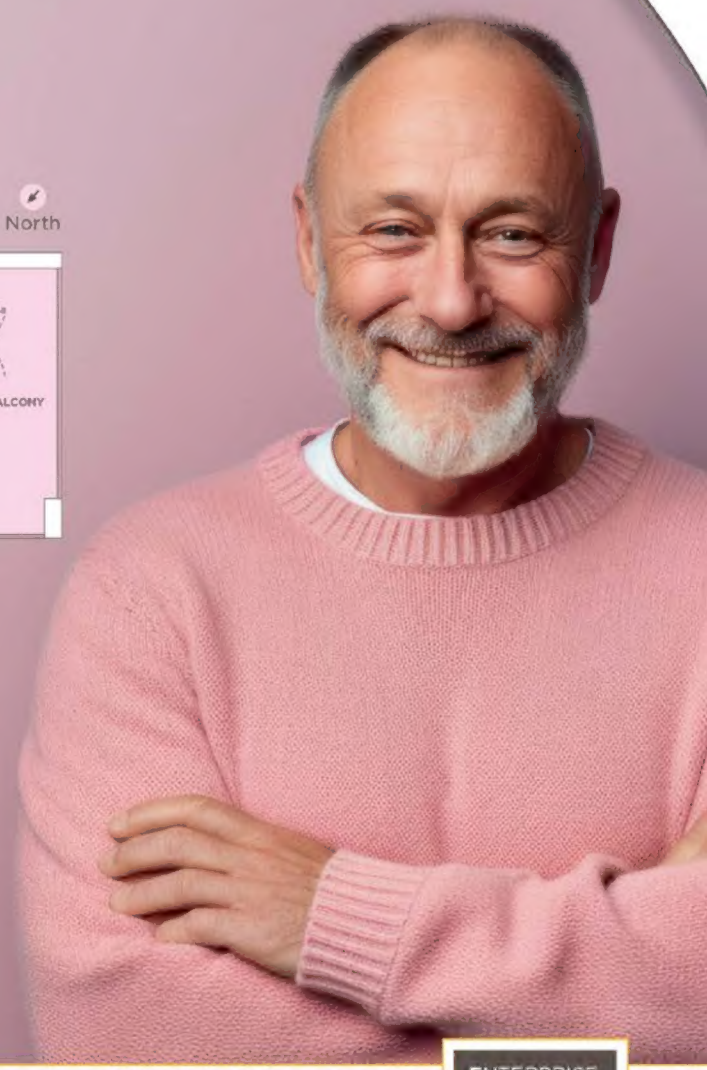

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CLAYTON'S LAST CHOP

VILLAGE butcher Clayton Fern, had been serving meat to Alvechurch for 50 years, when he made the decision to retire in June.

After a long service to Alvechurch and the surrounding areas, 66-year-old Clayton, who started in the butchers industry when he was just 16, said: "It was a difficult decision to make. But if I'd left it any longer, I'd start to get Christmas orders. At least this way it gives people some time to make other plans for Christmas."

When asked what he was going to do now, he replied with a chuckle: "Nothing!" Although clarified he has his motorbikes to keep him occupied and has also planned a big fishing trip to Mongolia (though the suggestion of a potential new business as a fishmonger was swiftly ruled out).

Villagers will miss Clayton, not just for his cuts of meat and produce but for his willingness to go above and beyond for the community.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, or unable to leave the house were still supplied with fresh meat. After 50 years, it's a well deserved break for Clayton, who has served generations in Alvechurch: "I've served people, and then I've served their children and then the grandchildren come in as well... that makes me feel a bit old!"

A familiar sight: Clayton mans the counter in the shop's final week.

Clayton began to make home deliveries around the area to ensure those too vulnerable to come to the shop

With it's traditional dark blue exterior tiles, Clayton Fern's butchers was a staple for many, and a much-loved and appreciated shop on Red Lion Street.

It was also the last butcher in Alvechurch, (following the closure of Jacob's butchers, previously E.J Crows & Son in The Square, in 2023).

Seen to be a huge loss for Alvechurch, villagers will now need to travel further to another local butchers, or head to the supermarkets for their weekly meat shop.

Clayton had a final message to villagers and all of his customers: "Thank you for supporting me over the last 50 years."

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD Rafe Lewis is celebrating winning four tickets to Blackwell Music Festival in September.

The Blackwell schoolboy exclaimed "wow!" when he was announced as the lucky winner of a draw at the village's summer festival in June. Entrants had completed a loyalty card by enjoying six fairground games. "It was very surprising out of all the people that were there and, well, I liked it!" he said. "It was a good surprise."

Rafe, who promised to take his mum, dad and brother, is a veteran who's enjoyed previous village music festivals. "I hope that firstly everyone has a really good time, and there will be inflatables and hopefully I can stay up late!" he added.

Rafe and his family will likely be joined by a sell-out crowd on Saturday September 7th with tickets selling fast. The day promises seven bands, plenty for kids to do, food stalls and arguably the cheapest festival beer prices for many miles around. Early bird tickets cost £15 for adults & £8 for children with under-5s free. They're available at Blackwell Store and online via www.tickettailor.com/.../blackwellfestival/1266027

HELPING THE ALEX

AN INCREDIBLE amount of hard work by the The League of Friends team at The Alexandra hospital, Redditch, has generated invaluable donations in order to purchase of much needed equipment.

Money by the group raised has provided almost 200 blade-less fans for patient comfort (traditional fans can harbour germs). A £75,000 ultrasound scanner was recently donated which will allow the urology department to greatly reduce waiting times and offer quicker diagnosis.

Mr Vincent Koo, Consultant Urologist, thanked the group for their generous donation and said: "We can also use it to perform kidney stone surgery by targeting the kidney to accurately make a puncture hole to access the stone directly. We are now able to perform more procedures as we can offer prostate biopsies at the same time as kidney stone surgery within the department."

The League of Friends rely on volunteers and would warmly welcome new recruits.

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BREEZE Hot and Cold Installations Ltd, established in 2008, brings more than 20 years of experience in plumbing and heating. We are proud to be recognised with numerous accreditations, including MCS and TrustMark certifications.

While maintaining our customer base and offering a wide range of plumbing and heating solutions, Breeze Hot and Cold Installations Ltd has recently ventured into the renewable energy sector, with a key focus on Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs).

An ASHP transfers heat from the outside air to water, which can then heat rooms in your home through radiators or underfloor heating. It also heats water stored in a hot water cylinder for use in taps, showers, and baths. The process involves absorbing heat from the air into a fluid, which then passes through a heat exchanger into the heat pump. The pump raises the temperature and transfers the heat to water. ASHPs are suitable for many types of homes and are the most common type of domestic heat pump in the UK, with tens of thousands of installations.

To support the government's net-zero approach, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) offers up to £7,500 towards the cost of a new heat pump, a 50% increase in support for air source models.

At Breeze Hot and Cold Installations, we can guide you through the ASHP installation process and handle the government grant application for you, making the transition to renewable energy even easier.

A family in the village of Alvechurch has been undergoing an extensive renovation of their home. Breeze Hot and Cold Installations is proud to contribute to transforming their house into an efficient, sustainable and beautiful home. The family has been exceptionally mindful of ensuring their changes are environmentally friendly while also future-proofing their home.

Highly efficient: An Air Source Heat Pump, installed in Alvechurch.

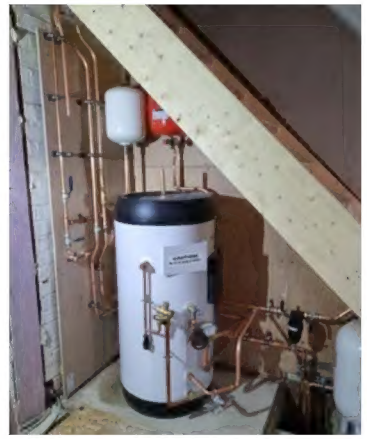
Their ASHP system is highly energy-efficient, producing more energy than it consumes. The family commented: "We are very happy with the result, still need to have a play with it during winter and set the temps etc. but so far it's working beautifully. Water pressure is brilliant, hot water temperature is perfect."

For this installation, the customer required both a cylinder and a buffer tank. There is often a misconception that cylinders and tanks are bulky and difficult to fit into the average home.

However, for our customer in Alvechurch, we were able to compactly and neatly fit both the cylinder and buffer tank under the staircase.

Another misconception for ASHPs is concerns for the noise volume. Since installation our customers have commented: "The noise of the pump is no louder than our fridge. It is not an issue at all. It's almost reassuring to hear it working. That is, when I notice it, which is not very often. It doesn't make noise all the time, as far as I can tell. Unless that is because I don't notice it because it's so quiet."

Alongside the installation the ASHP, Breeze Hot and Cold also installed Polypipe Underfloor Heating for our family in Alvechurch. Polypipe is an innovative and unique low-profile floor heating system. The underfloor heating systems works seamlessly with the ASHP making it a perfect heating solution.



A neat fit: The cylinder and the buffer tank fit under the stairs.

Further afield in Kington, Breeze Hot and Cold Installations recently completed a large-scale project by installing three ASHPs at a single property, providing a combined load of 30KW.

At Breeze, we offer a comprehensive design package to determine the best individualised setup for your property. Regardless of the size of your home or building, we can create plans to meet all your needs and requirements.

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If you're considering switching to renewable energy sources or have any heating and plumbing needs, Breeze Hot and Cold Installations are here to answer any questions you may have. Based in Alvechurch we are always happy to make time for members of our community.

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20 From TheVillage archive Years Ago

THE COVER of our combined July and August issue from 2004 showed a group of children from Tardebigge First School enjoying a canal boat trip from Alvechurch Marina to school, dressed in period costumes as part of a class project.

IN THE NEWS: Barnt Green Scouts launched an appeal to raise money for a new headquarters, after their 72-year-old hut was destroyed by fire. Retired leader Michael Docherty described the loss as "devastating" but said the "scouting spirit" would survive.

Elsewhere, Cofton Hackett residents celebrated as their bid to buy Cofton Lake was accepted, meaning the area would be safe from potential development.

RETIRING HEADTEACHER Norma Kift (left) handed over the keys to Crown Meadow First School to her successor Janette Morris, watched by chair of governors Margaret Parry. Mrs Kift had been at the school since 1988, and in charge for more than nine years.

ENGLAND SHIRTS for dogs proved popular during the Euro 2004 football tournament, as sold in Barnt Green shop Paws Here and modelled for *The Village* by owner James Slater's dog Amy.

10 From TheVillage archive Years Ago

OUR JULY 2014 cover featured a "voodoo lily" in the Alvechurch garden of Philip Aubury, former director of Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Philip's garden was among those taking part in the National Open Gardens scheme in the village that year. (See 20 years of open gardens on pages 44–45.)

THE ALVECHURCH neighbourhood plan was progressing after a first round of consultation with villagers. One early change was the plan's "vision" had been judged too long and amended to: "Alvechurch parish – a community where managed change and celebration of its rural character go together."

Alvechurch Parish neighbourhood plan

MIDDLE SCHOOL pupils in Alvechurch showed their skills during Arts Week by making a wicker man representing all four seasons.

Robbie Joynes, Molly Lewis, Sam Burgess, Bryony Trotter and Euan Thomas with the willow man

THE INAUGURAL Midland Golf Challenge trophy was presented by organiser Craig Stansfield (centre), of Alvechurch, to winners Rob Perkins and Richard Peach.

LICKEY & BLACKWELL parish councillors were considering a county council proposal to ease "car chaos" on the Old Birmingham Road at school drop-off and pick-up times. They wanted the county to go further than just putting double yellow lines close to the bus stop and impose further restrictions during the busy times.

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Village Views

NOT SO SPARKLING

Dear Editor – I totally agree with every item mentioned in M Witham's letter "Where's my sparkling service?" in last month's magazine (regarding the new route and timetable of the 182 and 183 Diamond bus service).

I have also used the old 182 bus for many years to Redditch and to Alvechurch library.

Now I can't go to the library as the bus no longer goes by it because of the route being changed.

Many potential passengers used to wait at the top of of Bittell Lane, Barnt Green, living either at this end of Sandhills Lane or Sandhills Road or, like myself, in Bittell Lane.

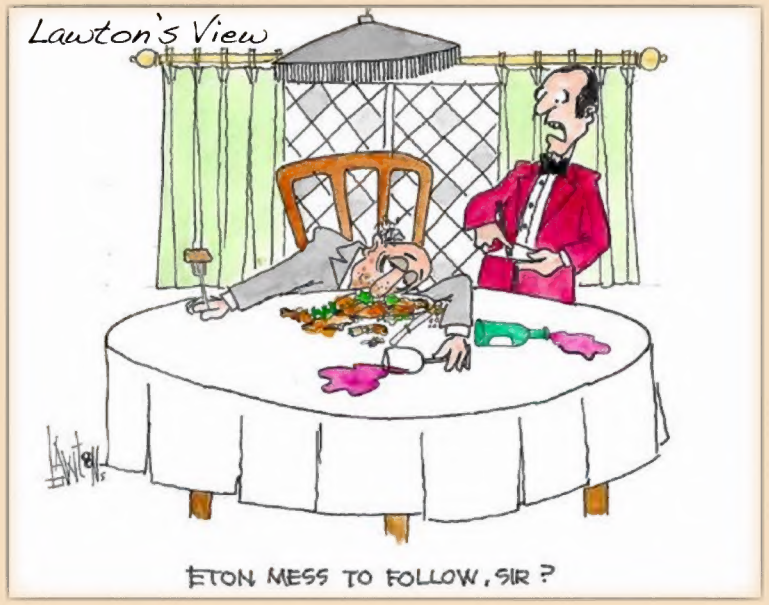
Now there is an eight to 10 minutes walk to a bus stop in the village. This was not researched properly, if at all!

Also there is no provision for wheelchair access to this bus. This bus should be for able-bodied and disabled passengers alike (the bus would need to be a larger bus for 22 passengers).

Why was it allowed for only 18 passengers so that the disabled could not use it?

It's not a service at all for a disabled passenger. It is certainly not a "Sparking Service".

S Roundell
Barnt Green



Remembering village Safeway

Dear Editor – I recently found this picture of a Safeway while I was sorting through old pictures I found at home in Alvechurch.

I believe this may have been located where the Co-op is, in the shopping precinct Alvechurch.

I was wondering if anyone had any recollection of this Safeway, and has any idea of the date it was taken – and even of the people on the picture.

Curious,
Alvechurch

Editor's note: If anyone would like to share any other history or images of the village area, we would be very interested to hear more and see any pictures.
You can email fran@villageonline.co.uk or call 07536 987950.

Have your say . . . about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication.
We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is August 5th 2024.

WHERE'S VINNY?

THREE–year–old Freddy Davies, from Alvechurch, shows off the Mini Vinny he won for finding the little creature in June's hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village* magazine.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he's hiding via email – see details on the bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on 1 August 2024. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

A TABLE TOP SALE at Alvechurch Baptist Church raised more than £720 towards the maintenance and management of the church. Villagers were invited to have a table to sell unwanted items for £10 per table, while acoustic band *Spirit of Rosa* played tunes throughout. There was also a plant sale, silent auction and a cake stall for visitors to peruse.

CARING FOR COMMUNITY

THE Lickey Community Group, (committee pictured above) formed to support and enhance the area, recently held their AGM.

It included an entertaining talk about the research and background of the recently unveiled information boards at Rednal, by Mike Brooke.

The Marlbrook Tip has occupied much of the group's time. Roy Hughes reported on a distinct lack of activity, although water escaping from the site was causing an issue to local homes.

BARNT GREEN golf rising star Jake Jeff-Johnston, aged 13, has qualified to play in the Faldo Futures Final.

The event, which will take place at The Belfry in August, will commence the day before The Betfred British Masters, which is also held at The Belfry.

Jake secured his place following a recent win – with a gross score of three under par – at a Sir Nick Faldo Futures Regional Qualifying Event at Sunningdale Heath in Ascot.

Securing his spot : Jake with Sir Nick Faldo.

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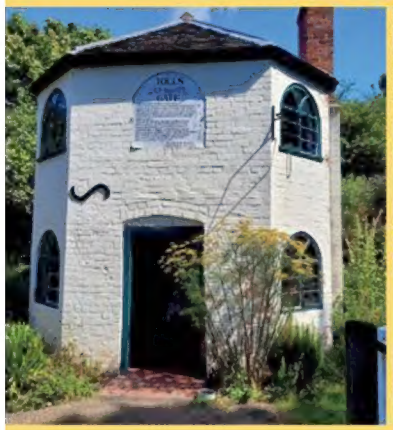

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FUEL THE JOURNEY

Donate to Support Triathlon Raising Money for Charity

THREE athletic young men are set to undertake an epic triathlon challenge this summer, that will span nearly 300 gruelling miles across five countries, to raise money for the Bromsgrove Basement Project for young people, *writes Sarah Rees*.

The adventure kicks off with Declan Ball diving into the icy waters of the English Channel, swimming its 21 miles of challenging currents unassisted to reach France. His anticipated time to complete the crossing is 15 hours!

Since Matthew Webb's historic swim in 1875, when he became the first to conquer the English Channel, only about 2,000 individuals have completed the treacherous solo crossing.

Declan, a 24-year-old Bromsgrove barber shop owner is a seasoned competitive swimmer and semi-pro boxer who thrives on adrenalin. However, as he gears up for his role, he is aware of the challenges ahead. This isn't just about stamina—he'll have to dodge jellyfish and battle unpredictable currents while navigating one of the world's busiest shipping lanes!

Once on French soil, 23-year-old plumber George Creed from Sutton Coldfield will seize the baton from Declan and embark on a staggering 50-mile ultra-marathon, running tirelessly to the Belgium border.

George played rugby for Worcester Warriors as a teenager, and has taken part in charity MMA fights, turning amateur this year. As a running rookie, he's counting on his rugged sports background to help him master pacing and endure the pain in his knees and feet as the miles grind on.

The final stage of the triathlon will take 23-year-old Bromsgrove based construction firm owner Dylan De Sousa on a relentless 200-mile cycle from Belgium to Germany.

The triathletes, clockwise from above: Dylan De Sousa, Declan Ball, George Creed.

Dylan was also once a force to be reckoned with on the rugby pitch. He is a professional scuba diver and self-confessed "gym junkie", who has only recently channelled his sporting passion into cycling. Nailing his nutrition will be crucial, as he'll be burning around 12,000 calories during the 200-mile cycle.

Together, the trio will conquer this monumental journey of endurance to raise vital funds for The Basement Project in Bromsgrove and mental health support charity, My Black Dog - transforming their sweat and aching limbs into support for people who are facing homelessness or dealing with severe mental health challenges.

It was back in December 2023 when the lads hatched their plan to tackle a sporting challenge and raise some serious money for the two charities. Since then, they have been pushing their limits, training relentlessly to reach peak physical fitness.

On 29th July, staff and volunteers from The Basement Project will be joining the trio for a 5K training run around Sanders Park.

Kelly Turner, fundraiser for The Basement Project said: "We are delighted that Declan, George and Dylan will be fundraising for us as part of this epic challenge. Every penny donated to The Basement Project goes towards supporting young people."

There is a two-week window for the start date of the triathlon because Declan's channel crossing is controlled by a "swim window", which ensures the conditions are optimal for the greatest chance of success. Based on this, it is hoped the challenge will take place late August/early September.

Visit https://triultrarelay.wixsite.com/charity for more information. Visit https://www.gofundme.com/f/the-triultra-relay to donate.

Village Events

PICNICKING AS IT POURS

VILLAGERS awoke on the morning of Alvechurch's Picnic in the Park to torrential rain.

Despite the downpour, the Picnic in the Park team continued to set up for the event, and by the time the Fun Dog Show started at 10am, the skies had cleared and things were looking a little brighter.

Hardy folk, unperturbed by "a bit of rain", donned wellies and raincoats, and arrived in droves at The Meadows, for a day of fun.

The planned bouncy castle and pony rides were unable to set up, but most stalls and performances braved the weather and went ahead as planned.

While it was brighter than feared, occasional downpours drove people to take cover under marquees and umbrellas – though this didn't dampen spirits and villagers carried on in good humour.

The event was officially opened at midday, just as a particular monsoon-like downpour began and xxxxxxxxxx cut the ceremonial ribbon.

Alvechurch Community Choir took to the stage, and sung through the rain.

By the time the dancers from Amy Greaves School of Dance were due to perform, the skies had once again brightened up, although the school had to quickly adapt some of their routines for the wet ground (however the senior dancers continued with their original routine anyway, including a roll, to the pleasure of the crowd).

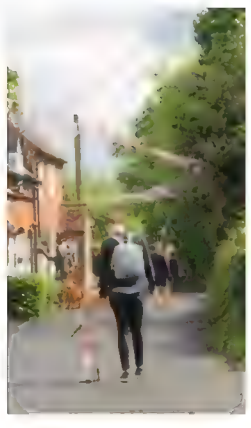
A variety of groups performed musical pieces throughout the day, including ukelele bands, choirs and vocalist Karen Germano.

As the day drew to a close, those who were staying out, made their way to Alvechurch Cricket Club to continue the festivities into the evening.

A spokesperson for the event said:

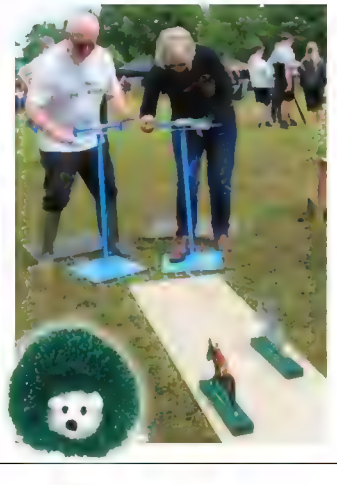
Continues on Page 22

The picnic is open: Winning logo designer Hugo Lamb, cuts the ribbon to officially open the picnic – just as the heavens opened.

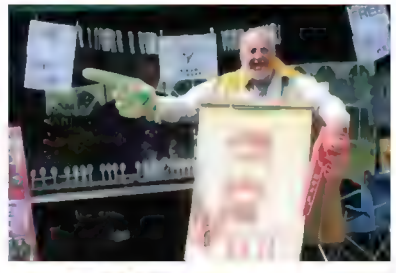


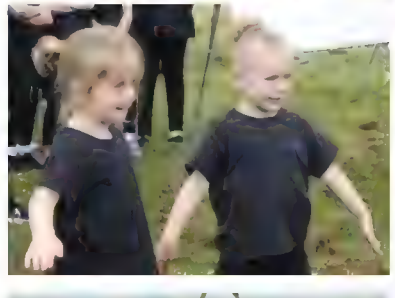
Above: Parish Councillors Sue Lambert and Marc Worrall judge the cake contest.

Clockwise from above left: Skies look a little brighter above Meadow Lane, Fiona and Neil Edwards and team raising money for Birmingham Children's Hospital, Martin and Mariea Clarke from the Alvechurch Village Society race their horses, The Fun Dog Show winners and their owners.



Clockwise from above left: The event team under one giant umbrella, Crowds brave the weather to listen to Alvechurch Community Choir, 'Splat the Rat' at Alvechurch Village Society's stall, The crowd gets into the swing of the music, Alvechurch Community Choir sing above the downpour, The Village Larder give away free plant labels (plastic spoons), Alvechurch Rainbows host a stall of teddies.





Clockwise from right: Some BAA-utiful cakes for sale, Face painting proved popular, Dancers from Amy Greaves School of Dance show off their musical theatre skills, 'The Bordesley' contingent of stewards, Young AGSOD dancers delight the crowds.

continues from previous page

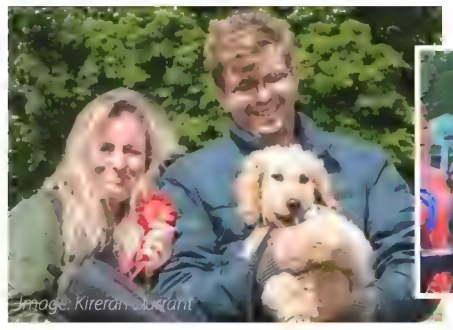
"This was our most challenging event yet but people were still smiling at the end of the day. Despite the odd downpour we still provided a busy dog show and an afternoon packed full of activities, entertainment, crafts, competitions, food and fun.

"A massive thank you to our lovely visitors who turned up to support the event, our stallholders and our entertainers. Lots of thanks are also due to our wonderful sponsors."

From top: Parish councillors Brett Shepherd and Marc Worrall man the Parish Council stand. Winners of the Dog show (*taken by Kieran Durrant*, clockwise from top left): Prettiest Bitch, Best Rescue, Waggiest tail, Best Junior, Owner/dog lookalike, Handsomest dog.

Clockwise from top left: Outstanding cake, demonstrating the event's theme of the environment and climate change, Got to sing choir's upbeat performance, Karen Germano's melodic voice echoed around the park, Picnic-ers revelling in the sunny spells of the afternoon.

Clockwise from above: Win a bear for charity, The Lounge host the popular cake stall, The Midland Sinfonia play on, despite the dramatic downpours, A rainy plant stall, Sarah Courbet has a laugh presenting the Fun Dog Show, The cutest puppy winner, Cookie shows off first place with owners.



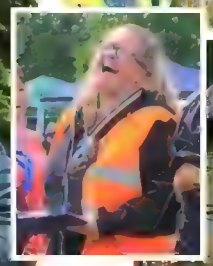


Image: Kieran Durrant

Words and pictures by Keith Woolford

BROMSGROVE BEERS

BROMSGROVE beer festival was once again hailed a success by event organisers, with this year's festival offering more than 130 ales and more than 50 ciders.

The event even managed to entice many away from the football on the television.

The 2024 beer festival used "The Rousler" as the logo, which means "to wake up", and there duly was not much chance of people drifting off at the festival, with plenty on offer to entertain the crowds.

Singer and guitarist Clare Portman, "Lost Notes" group, Alvechurch Morris Men, Got2Sing choir and the Blackwell Concert Band all performed throughout the day, providing plenty of music and fun for people to enjoy while having a drink, or something tasty from one of the food wagons.

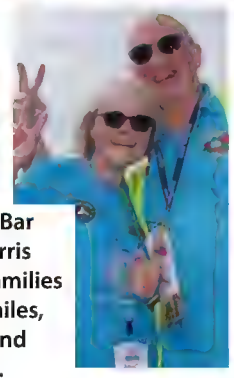
Town Crier Kevin Ward opened the event, with the formalities of the Court Leet, who duly tested the ale – which was declared suitable for all to enjoy.

Almost 80 new CAMRA members were signed up during the festival and the organisers urged new volunteers to help out at future festivals.

Proceeds from this year's festival were donated to the Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust who said they were: "delighted and thrilled to have been chosen" and gave their heartfelt thanks to CAMRA and the festival team.

Another win: The Weighbridge is awarded Pub of the Year by CAMRA again

Clockwise from right: Town Crier Kevin Ward with the Court Leet, Groups enjoy the ale on offer, A youngster has a go on the Morris instruments, Got2Sing choir pose together, 'The Cider Bar Crew'.



Clockwise from left: Bar staff look cheery, Morris Men enjoy the ale, Families and friends are all smiles, Blackwell Concert Band entertain the crowds.

BLACKWELL BONANZA

ORGANISERS OF Blackwell Village Festival were thrilled with the glorious June weather that greeted them on the morning of the much anticipated village event.

The festival, which is a well-supported, now annual event in Blackwell, had an abundance of fun and games for all ages throughout the day.

As with 2023, children were presented with cards on arrival, to be stamped at each games stall, including hook-a-duck, a soccer challenge and the "Nerf gun" gallery. Once completed with all of the stamps, the card could then be exchanged for a bag of sweets.

For those unable to take part in the children's challenges, there was casked ale on tap, a Prosecco bar and soft drinks.

Villagers turned up, with camping chairs, gazebos and picnic blankets, ready to pick their spot for the day and bask in the beautiful early summer weather.

For those who didn't bring a picnic with them to enjoy, a mobile pizza truck served delicious pizzas, and cakes were available from the church cake tent.

A bouncy castle provided entertainment for young, old, and everyone in between – Rev Sherry Gidney and Rev Louise Beasley gave it a good go.

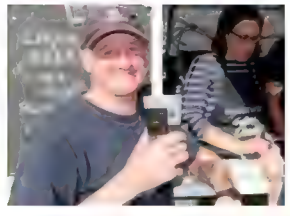
The afternoon also saw the now traditional Tug O'War, bringing everyone together as younger and more experienced tuggers worked together in a heartfelt show of strength – though it was not entirely clear who the winning teams were (but that's not the point!).

The event concluded with live music from The Reflections, a four-piece band playing in their smart "The Prisoner" jackets. Much fun was had by all who attended.

Blackwell's next big event, their music festival will be held again in September. Tickets are available now.

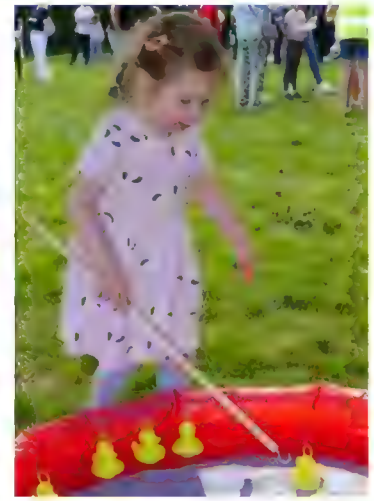
Bouncing Vicars: Rev Sherry Gidney and Rev Louise Beasley enjoy the festival entertainment.

A well deserved sit-down: The festival team take a break from running the event.

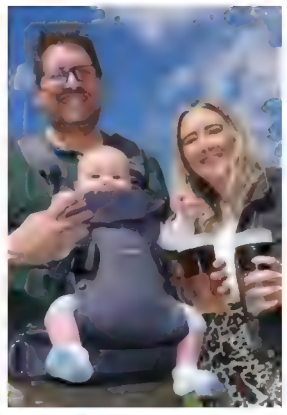


From left: The Reflections look smart, Tug O'War saw all ages take part, Did they co-ordinate their hat choices before the event? Enjoying some of the refreshments on offer.

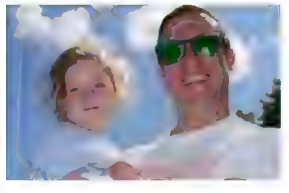
Enjoying the sunshine: Villagers set up camp for the day, with gazebos and tents on the field.



Hooked!: A youngster tries out the games stalls.



Clockwise from left: High spirits, A family enjoy some drinks, Delicious pizza kept everyone going. Some confident Tug O'War contestants, The cake stall is fully stocked, The Tug O'War continues to be a highly competitive event.



From Left: Families enjoying the event, The bouncy castle proved ever-popular, Plenty of prosecco to go around.

Words and pictures by Keith Woolford

GLASTON-BIGGER!

GROWING year on year, Glastonbeoley is a "must" for the diary. This year, Worcestershire's answer to Worthy Farm, was held at Redditch Cricket, Hockey and Rugby Club.

Twenty performances graced the big stage, with a further 21 in the club house over the weekend, catering to all musical tastes.

Although consistently a very popular event, even the organisers were pleasantly surprised by the popularity of the event. Event organiser Debbie Joynes said: "This year's GlastonBeoley took us all by surprise. It seemed as though we doubled in numbers overnight!

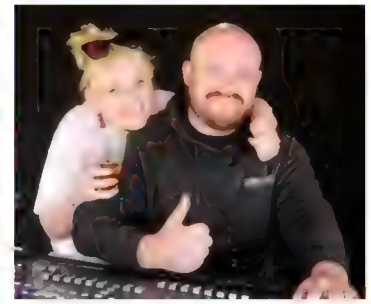
"The people were as varied and beautiful as the music. It was so lovely to see so many families having such a great time together."

Between 2018–2023, Glastonbeoley has raised over £35,000 for charity, which Debbie said was aided by "the brilliant musicians, who all perform for free, and are just amazing."

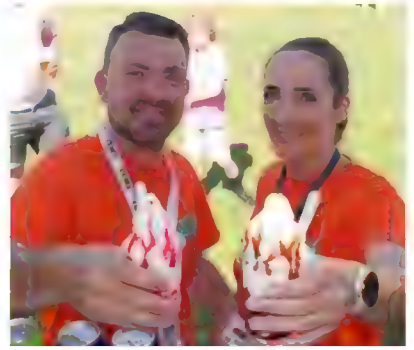
Debbie thanked the volunteers of this year's successful event: "The running of this real community event is only possible with our dedicated volunteers, and we are always looking for more."

Plans are already coming together for Glastonbeoley 2025, if you are interested in joining the crew, or visiting, you can keep up with the event at www.glastonbeoley.co.uk.

Clockwise from above: Welcome to Glastonbeoley, Lucky dip at the raffle stand, The Bagel Mafia tent, Laughs all round, Blue skies and bright shirts, Youngsters enjoy the event - and bubbles, The event crew.

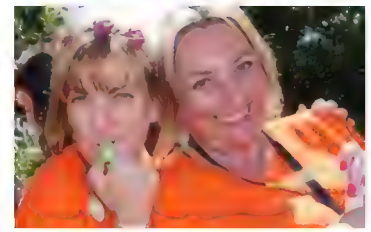


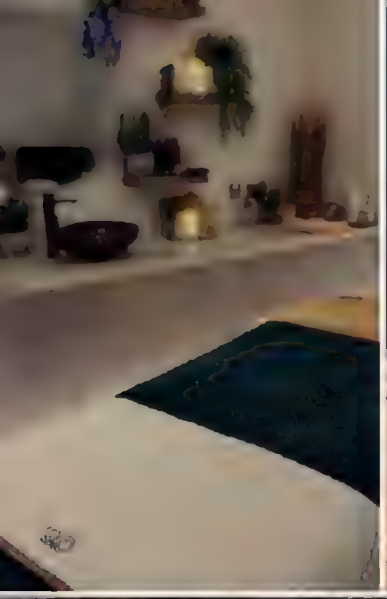
Clockwise from left: A busy field to watch the big stage, Event orgnaiser Debbie Joynes in the south booth, *Vaccine 7*'s set on the stage.

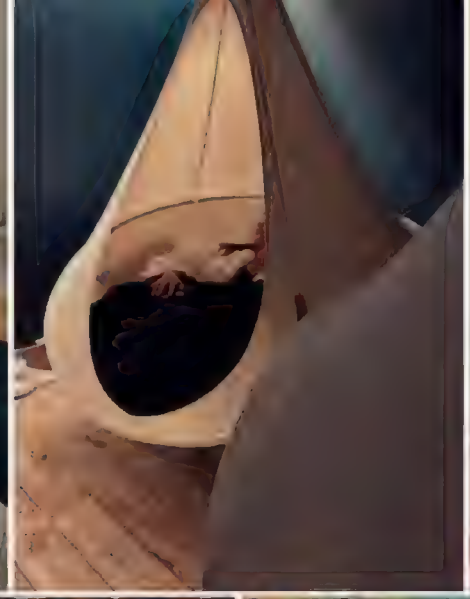


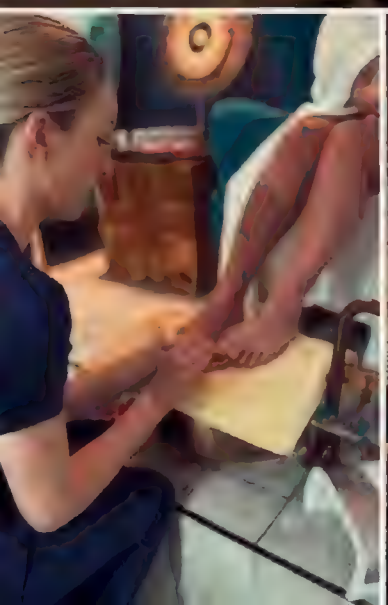
Anti-clockwise from above centre: Ice creams the size of your head, Festival fashion brought to Glastonbeoley, Jamaican food delights. Colourful party outfits, *Take Cover* take to the stage, Cheers all around for Glastonbeoley.

From left: Security stand out. Festival children take a break in the shade. Sparkles and smiles for the crew.









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WELCOME TO THE CLINIC

Millhouse Clinics welcomed villagers through their doors in Alvechurch, giving them a chance to look around the beautiful facilities and to explore the wide range of treatments their skilled and experienced team are providing.

millhouse clinics ALVECHURCH

MILLHOUSE Clinics recently held their open day in the beautiful listed building, The Mill, in the heart of Alvechurch. The event gave villagers the opportunity to explore the clinic and the wide range of treatments they offer.

Visitors, who were able to have a look around the clinic and inside the treatment rooms, were also able to have their skin analysed by a skin care specialist from Obaji.

Michelle, Sharon, Daniel and Caroline from the highly skilled Millhouse Clinics team also met with many visitors to explain more about what each of them provide and how treatments are carried out at Millhouse Clinics.

Michelle Burke, who runs the Clinic, said: "We had an absolutely fantastic day, with more than 100 people coming to see us. It was unbelievable!

"Everybody was lovely and we had great feedback. We'd also just like to say thank you to everyone who came, and we hope to see you again soon."

The new clinic will be providing a range of treatments including:

- Advanced facials
- HydraFacial
- Chemical peels
- Microblading
- Semi-permanent make-up
- Laser hair removal
- Acne/iPixel/Tattoo removal/laser facials
- Injectables

The team hope to expand their treatments even further in the coming months to cater for all needs and are looking forward to welcoming villagers through their doors.

The Mill: The beautiful home of Millhouse Clinics on Radford Road, Alvechurch.

Above: A range of aesthetics treatments are available from the sparkling clinic rooms.

The Millhouse team (from left): Sharon Hynes, Daniel Johnson, Michelle Burke and Caroline Wild.

ROOMS AND OFFICE SPACE TO RENT

If you have a health, wellbeing or holistic therapy business, and would be interested in renting a therapy room, please get in touch with Michelle at Millhouse Clinics.

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HELLO, SUMMER!

WE hope, anyway! Or was that one week we had at the end of June 'it' for our summer this year? If you're longing for some summer sun –and the tan to go with it – our skincare experts would like to remind you that the best product for amazing skin this summer (and the rest of your life) is suncream.

There are plenty of salons locally which can provide fake tans and spray tans, but not many which can give you new skin after yours has been sun damaged – so wear the suncream, yes we know, even if it's not really sunny.

Of course, there are lot of other ways to treat yourself this summer, if you want silky smooth legs (or anywhere really), as well as traditional shaving and waxing, you can explore IPL (Intense Pulsed Light technology), which targets the root of hair follicles to prevent new growth. Sounds great. . . surely it takes ages? Actually, some salons have technology which can zap these areas in as little as 30 mins per session. Short enough to pop in on your lunch break!

It's going to get busy in our village salons over summer, so – this is your reminder to book your appointments for your summer nails hair removal or tans (maybe book a few so you're sorted for all of summer). And, remember your suncream!

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Enchanting evenings

The talent: Members of The Midland Sinfonia with Craig Oden (left).

THE MIDLANDS Sinfonia concluded their season with a final concert "Love & Romance" and many of the audience would be forgiven believing the best was kept for last.

The headline performer was the world-renown guitarist Craig Ogden (pictured below) who has been described by the *BBC Music Magazine* as "A worthy successor to Julian Bream". The Australian-born guitarist joined the orchestra for a number of pieces during the evening.

The programme included works by Vivaldi, Boccherini, Sibelius and two pieces by Elgar. The breadth of the concert included *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* penned by the late Freddie Mercury and *Romance No.1* by Classic FM presenter John Brunning.

Chair of the society Marian Barwell said it was: "A fantastic last concert of the season. It was wonderful to have Craig return to perform with the orchestra. His first visit to Alvechurch was for a solo concert in March 2020, the last before we were obliged to cancel the remaining programme when the dreaded pandemic stopped play".

Belying their village location, this professional orchestra manages to attract a surprising number of high quality musicians in addition to its regulars players.

The new season details are now being finalised with trips out to venues further afield promised.

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Laura Siddall
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Laura Daniels
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Louise Wheeler
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Jodie Morey
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THE DECEPTIVE ALLURE OF 'MORE'

This month, **Martin Pryor** explains the tradeoff between how we spend and save our money and what our financial decisions mean for our futures.

CASHFLOW is the lifeblood of any financial plan. How we allocate the money coming in will determine both the present and the future of our families. It's not a glamorous topic, but it's undeniably ground zero of financial success.

Our cashflow challenges evolve as we move through the different life phases. Our early working years are typically about providing for essential daily "needs".

For those whose careers allow them to break free from daily concerns, the allure of certain "wants" starts to emerge. These desires challenge our beliefs about what we need to be happy.

This internal battle rages on throughout life, and how we respond to this challenge will determine our future financial success. But what truly brings fulfilment, and what consequences do these decisions have for our future selves?

THE QUICKSAND OF ACCUMULATION

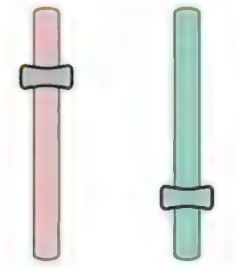
Our desire to accumulate more is grounded in evolution. A striving for "more" drove past generations to create the world we now live in, and current-day economic theory is still based on the assumption that "more is better".

But, in a world where most of us have moved well beyond providing for basic needs, does this instinct for more create problems we could do without?

As financial advisers, we have witnessed firsthand families who have become ensnared by lifestyle creep at the expense of their futures. It's a tradeoff many now regret, but like quicksand that gradually ensnares its victim, it's difficult to break free.

Similarly, we have worked with many wealthy families who have found a way to overcome the desire for "shiny new things".

ARE YOU PURSUING "MORE" OR EMBRACING "ENOUGH FOR TOMORROW"?



These families have a well-developed and personal philosophy of their values and a clear picture of what they consider a life well-lived.

EMBRACING THE TRADEOFF

There are many ways that spending can bring happiness and joy – interestingly, many of our clients have shifted their spending from possessions to experiences with family and loved ones.

However, everything in financial planning is a tradeoff. For many, embracing "more" comes at the expense of their own "tomorrow".

Tragically, this only becomes evident in most cases when it's too late to change course. Before all of us lies the invitation to let go of pursuing "more", choosing instead to embrace "enough".

We appreciate and understand that everyone's definition of satisfaction and "enough" is unique and personal.

No matter what your definition of "enough" is, for most of us, this still means lives magnitudes better than our grandparents.

NAVIGATING TOGETHER

We encourage you to seek clarity about what is truly important to you, bringing more intention to your spending and investing.

All consumption cannot, and should not, be avoided. Indeed, one person's "want" is another person's "need".

While you will always remain the expert in the design of your own life, we are the experts in guiding families in making the tradeoffs that provide them both meaning and an independent future.

Guiding families from pursuing "more" to embracing "enough for tomorrow" is our reason for being.

The comprehensive planning we provide includes all the tools you need to walk your financial journey successfully.

We look forward to guiding you on your journey to "enough".

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner
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This article should not be regarded as personal advice. You should seek independent financial advice to apply these theories to your circumstances.

Advertisement feature

To fix or not to fix..?

That is the question! Mark Meads explains the options you have when it comes to fixing your mortgage rate and how **Village Financial** can help guide you to make the right choice.

RECENTLY I've been having a lot of conversations with clients about whether or not to fix their mortgage rate.

The Bank of England maintained their interest rate at 5.25% in June, despite inflation falling back to their target of 2%. Many commentators at the beginning of the year had predicted that we would have had lower rates by now.

Whilst there is still an expectation that interest rates will come down a little this year, realistically it is unlikely to get back to the rates we have seen in recent times.

This leaves my clients with difficult decisions and while everyone's individual circumstances are different, there seem to be two clear routes.

Either fix now for five years plus, knowing that you can afford the payments for this period whatever happens to interest rates.

Or alternatively fix for a shorter period of two or three years, in the hope that rates may come down by the end of that period.

If you're wondering what would be the best way forward for you, come and have a chat about your options

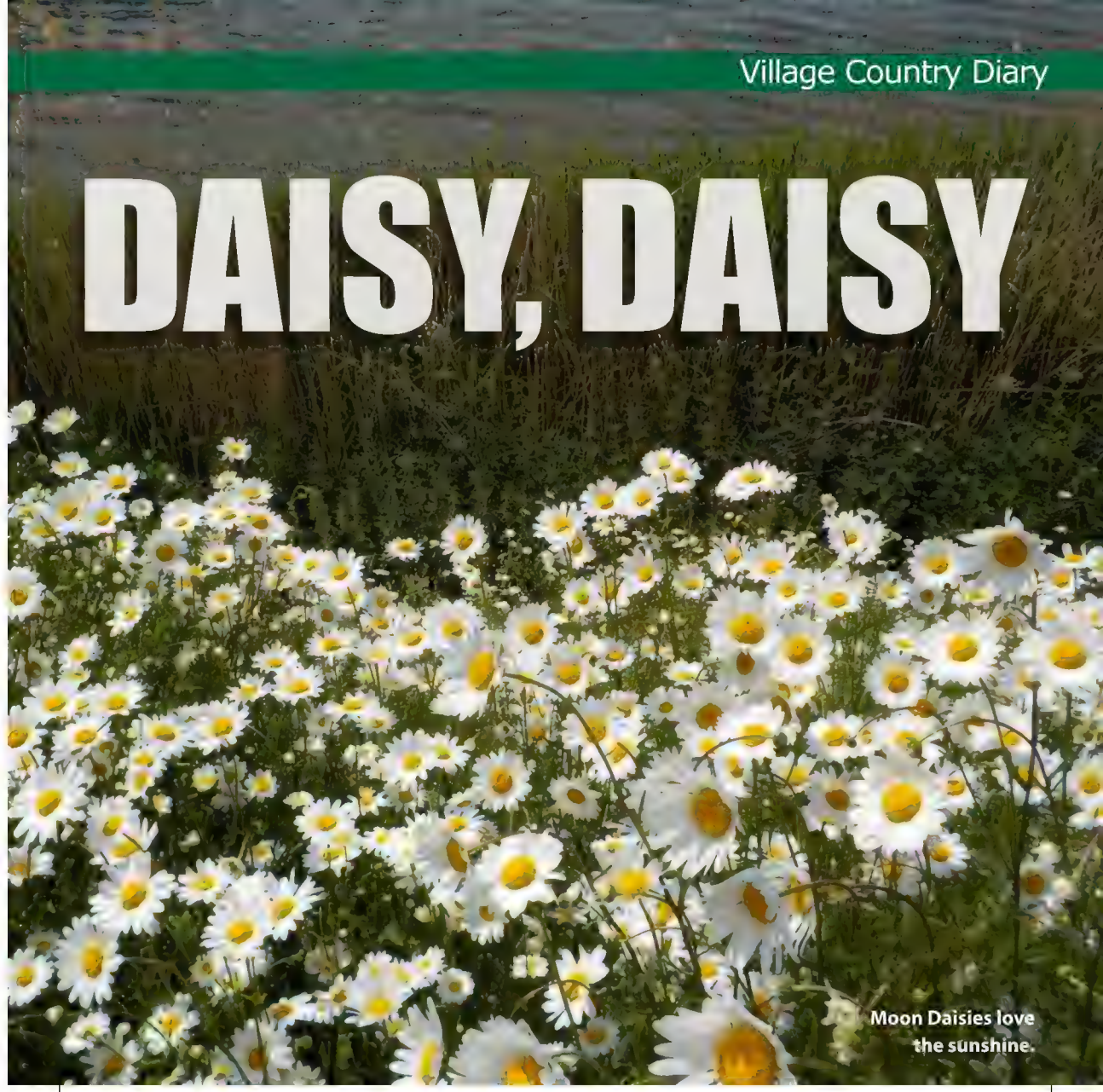
Whether it be a residential, buy to let or other type of mortgage, we can guide you on the best way forward and help take away some of the anxiety about making that choice.

Mark Meads (above), and his team will help you navigate your mortgage, and the options availbale to you.

If you would like an initial discussion to see how we can help, please contact us on 07730 011 897 or through our website: www.villagefinancial.co.uk

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage

DAISY, DAISY



Moon Daisies love the sunshine.

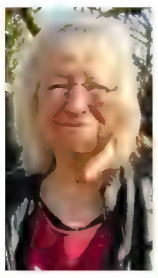
IT'S been another month where we've heard dire warnings of the depletion of our nature, losing plants, insects, birds and other animals more and more.

Some of you may have been at the inspiring talk about bumblebees at the Alvechurch Village Society in May.

The speaker made it very clear that the solution for the success of this species and many others was a continuous supply of flowering plants.

I hope no one started cutting down the flowering plants in their gardens on 1 June, thinking no-mow-May was good enough.

All flowering plants except grasses and some trees carry the nectar and pollen that insects need, and we



This month **Mary Green** talks us through the plants we see every day that are far more important than we may realise . . .

should aim for a continuous run of flower from March to August at least.

Cutting them down in early June is probably worse than not letting them grow, as insects will have been

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encouraged to make their homes there, only to find their food supply gone. Sadly this has happened in St Laurence churchyard, which is not usually mowed quite so suddenly and comprehensively.

However, as I write this, in June, there are some lovely "lawns" full of flowers on my walk from Withybed into Alvechurch. I hope they keep it up!

This continuous flowering happens in our biggest flower family Compositae, now renamed Asteraceae. Its more common name is the Daisy family.

There are more than 100 species, some difficult for a non-specialist to tell apart. Others are so common that we don't really value them. You can find them in flower pretty well all year round, and they are a vital source of nectar and pollen for insects as well as providing food for birds.

The "flowers" are actually clusters of tiny flowers or florets, each with pollen and nectar. There are two kinds, ray and disc florets. Daisies have both: the yellow disc florets in the middle and the white ray florets outside.

Daisies are associated with childhood, perhaps because they are so common and grow readily in human-planted lawns. Most of us can remember making daisy chains.

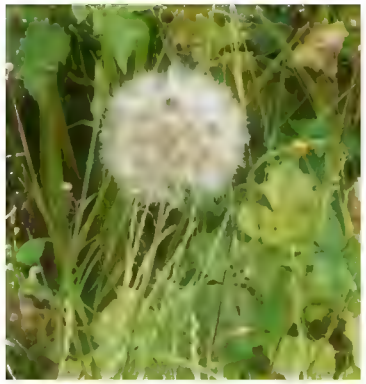
The name means "day's eye" because it opens in broad daylight and closes at night or in bad weather. The Latin name is Bellis perennis, meaning beautiful all year.

In mild years it will flower in winter and continue through till summer. It is very resilient and will try to grow again if mowed down. The leaves and flowers, like many Compositae, are edible.

A common member of this family is the dandelion – with ray florets only.

For some reason we love daisies but not dandelions. Yet they are a crucial plant for maintaining our biodiversity. They are the main nectar and pollen source for insects in early spring and have been described as one of the three most important nectar providers in our flowers (along with clover and heather).

Lucky for insects: Insects love a daisy, which flowers continuously.



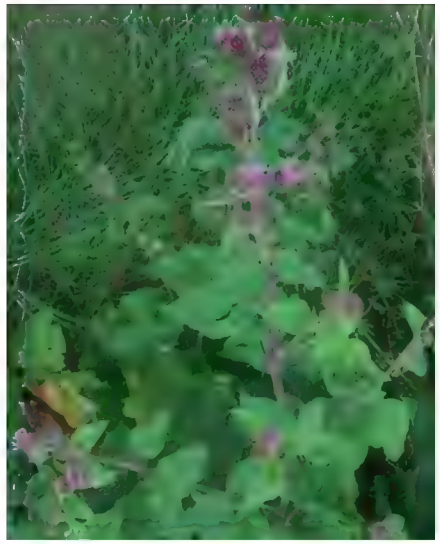
Dandelion: Seeds ready to blow away.

If you visit an ancient biodiverse hay meadow like Eades Meadow in May or June it is full of different species of flowers, but if you go in March, you'll see a field of dandelions.

Yet adverts for plant killers (which help destroy our environment) especially target dandelions. Perhaps this is because they are so strong and deep-rooted. This helps them secure carbon in the soil. Like daisies they will try to flower again if mown down. However, if you leave them alone they will only flower once in the spring.

Dandelions are eaten by animals, insects – and humans. The leaves appear in recipes in fancy restaurants, and the flowers and young leaves are used in salads.

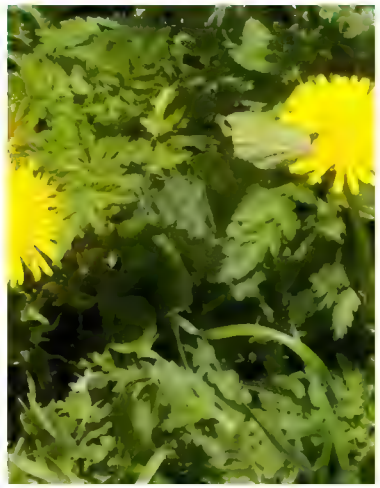
They have much more food value than lettuce. The roots have had various uses including "dandelion coffee" and we all know the old-fashioned drink dandelion and burdock (burdock being another member of this plant family).



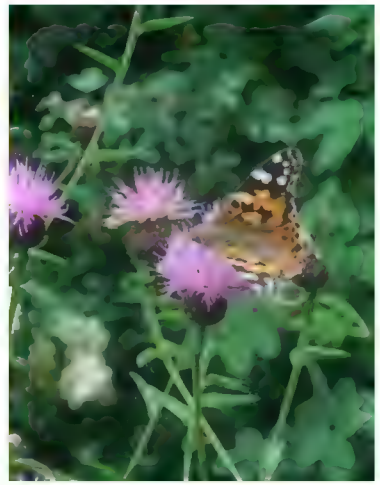
Burdock: Part of the old-fashioned drink.

They have ancient herbal usage, being diuretic. The French name is "pissenlit" meaning wet-the-bed, and many of local names are similar. You may have been told as a child not to pick them as they made you wet the bed (you'd have to eat a lot for this!).

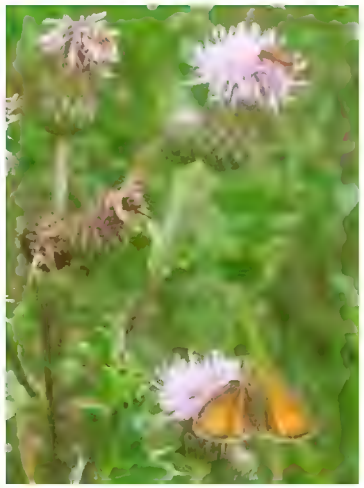
If everyone who reads this didn't cut off dandelions and daisies before they've flowered and died down, we could rescue some of our insect population, and out birds, and ourselves.



Camouflaged: Brimstone butterfly on a dandelion.



Painted lady butterfly: On knapweed.



Taking a rest: Butterfly on a thistle.

Compositae flower late in the year as well as early. A prominent one in July is knapweed, a handsome purple flower with two species, the "greater" with long ray florets.

It grows in old meadows and pasture and unmown hedgerows. It attracts insects and birds and the heads persist late into the winter. It is rather like a prettier, non-prickly thistle. But don't overlook the thistle either. It's one of those resilient plants which is a huge source of pollen and nectar and food for birds.

There are 14 species of thistle, from the standard spear thistle to the marsh thistle which spreads readily from its roots to the beautiful woolly thistle and towering Scottish thistle.

Then there are two yellow ones called sowthistle, one prickly and one not.

Like many Compositae, they have seeds with silky attachments allowing them to float in the wind and spread.

These seeds are loved by birds and you will sometimes see big flocks on thistles, especially goldfinches.

The prickles mean the plants aren't easily eaten by mammals. But many insect larvae can eat the young leaves, making them extra valuable. I have a five-foot prickly sowthistle in my garden!

Perhaps the most contentious plant in this family is ragwort, a large plant with raggedy toothed leaves and yellow flowers with disc and ray florets.

Bumblebee: Hawkbit in a mixed meadow.

Like many of our wild plants it carries protective chemicals which can be poisonous or can be used as medicine.

It is poisonous to cattle and especially horses, which is why it is so disliked, and one of the plants the law tells you not to allow to grow near livestock.

Yet cattle and horses will not usually eat it – they know. Unfortunately they may eat it if it is cut and dried out when they may not recognise it, which means you don't want it in hayfields.

Horses in badly overgrazed pasture where there is insufficient food may eat ragwort out of desperation.

Oddly enough sheep can eat it happily.

Ragwort is the food plant for one of our most attractive moths, the cinnabar moth. This has tiger-stripy yellow and black caterpillars and beautiful red and black adults. They used to be common and helped to keep ragwort under control. Because ragwort has been removed so much, they have become rare. So when ragwort comes back, they aren't there to control it.

You can't take out one of our native plants without altering the balance of nature and destroying something else.

Ragwort especially grows where humans have already disturbed the balance and especially when they have then let nature take over. It's an

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early coloniser but is gradually reduced as other plants and trees become more established.

The drug in ragwort is being investigated as a possible cancer treatment. It's also of course a great nectar and pollen source for all insects.

If we didn't have this fear of it we'd find it beautiful. I saw big bunches of it being sold on a street stall in London as cut flowers – they called it Summer Gold. On the Isle of Man where it is called cushag it is a national flower.

A flower everyone seems fascinated by is pineapple weed. This small plant has only disc florets and looks like a little pineapple. It smells like pineapple when crushed and sure enough tastes like it too. It has an interesting habit – it grows in gateways. It is an annual and so depends on there being a bit of wet bare earth to start its seeds growing every year.

Something you will see around you a lot in the summer and autumn is a tall yellow flower a bit like a dandelion.

There are a lot of different species all of which look very similar, and are variously called hawkbit, hawkweed or cat's ear. They come up frequently in lawns. They aren't dandelions but are also a vital pollen and nectar source.

One that is easily spotted is autumn hawkbit, a tall showy yellow flower that comes in late summer and lasts through September. It is always covered with insects. If it's orange, it's fox-and-cubs!

Many Compositae have medicinal herbal properties. One of my favourites is tansy, which used to be common round here but won't survive cutting.

It has lots of little yellow buttons (disc florets only) and very scented leaves. It was called the poor man's myrrh as it was used as a preservative of anything dead (it also makes lovely cakes, which keep for ages!). Insects love it and it even has a shiny little beetle of its own.

One of the most attractive is another daisy, the moon daisy or ox-eye daisy. Everyone knows this and it is often grown in gardens, though a true wild flower. It can cover open areas in summer, loving old hay meadows, pastures, verges and anywhere there is sunshine. Chamomile is similar but smaller with feathery leaves and many-flowered stems.

Later in summer comes another very common Compositae called nipplewort. This has tiny green buds like nipples followed by small starry yellow flowers and then a beautiful seed structure (I used some in my Christmas decorations last year). I think its name is a good way to remember that "wort" (the old word for a herbal plant) is pronounced as "wert" not (as many think) as "wart".

After all, no-one wants nipple warts!

■ **Here's a poem (right) I wrote recently when the Withybed Poets had "Heroes" as their theme.**

Editor's Note: Apologies for two errors last month. A typo crept into the heading for this article which should have read "Creatures of breath" (not breadth). And that bee on the flower was actually a fly – a common error made there. Many flies and hoverflies mimic wasps and bees, helping to keep themselves safe from predators.

Clockwise from above: A bee sits on Fox-and-cubs, Ragwort feeds many insects, Chamomile, with feathery leaves.

No Heroes

No heroes -
Except perhaps the ones who watch the dying
Pick children up and kiss away their bruises
Clean up the mess of other people, smiling.
No heroes -
But maybe those who work in underground dark
Or icy winds to bring me light and warmth
And those who take up a fiddle and play
Or sing so sweetly that it breaks down fences.
No heroes -
Save farmers who know the ways of worms
And loop the fields in hedges full of may
The neighbours who are quietly beside you
Just when you didn't know you needed them.
Not statues, whose feet are truly clay
Not chests of medals made of metals
My heroes -
People whose feet are flesh and touch the earth.

The anonymous birder

How to enjoy village birdlife

SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I'VE returned to using my bird feeder again. I was wary of harmful viruses which have affected certain finches in recent years. But the advice seems to be that as long as you clean the feeders on a fairly regular basis, the positive effects outweigh the negative effects of creating an environment where a large number of birds will artificially visit the same spot to feed.

This does create a "pecking order" where a clear hierarchy emerges.

Generally, a good big 'un beats a good little 'un.

The greater spotted woodpecker will dominate on its occasional visits, followed by the nuthatch. Then the finches fight it out with themselves, robins and dunnocks. Followed by the tit family the smallest of which, the coal tit with a white stripe on the back of it's head – flits in and out at top speed before it gets mugged by a larger rival.

There's a lot of that in the bird world, rather like when somebody nicks one of your chips without permission.

Gulls are always doing it and not just with chips. Observe them at the local lake or if you take a beach holiday; seemingly spending more energy on stealing things off other birds than being good, honest birds searching for food themselves. "Kleptoparasitism" is what it's called, the next time you unknowingly share your food.

The world of feeding birds doesn't seem as simple as it once was. Where do the experts stand on feeding the ducks these days?

You will probably have seen notices being blissfully ignored in your local parks on not feeding bread to the birds.

The RSPB advice seems to suggest that feeding birds bread "in moderation" is not harmful, however if lots of people feed them bread in moderation then the birds just get lazy and eat that instead of what they would naturally eat, such as vegetation and seeds.

A good rule of thumb would be: if you are going to feed birds try to make it something that they might find in the wild.

I've not seen a duck leaving Tesco Express with a loaf of white sliced bread in it's bill. Even if it did, an urban gull would probably practise kleptoparasitism on it and make a chip butty with the rest of its illicit bounty.

Back in the garden I find sunflower hearts work well with a range of birds and they don't have to use up energy removing the husk of the seed. Particularly useful in the winter when feeding takes up most of a bird's day.

The smaller the bird the greater surface area to lose heat from and the bigger energy gap to make up.

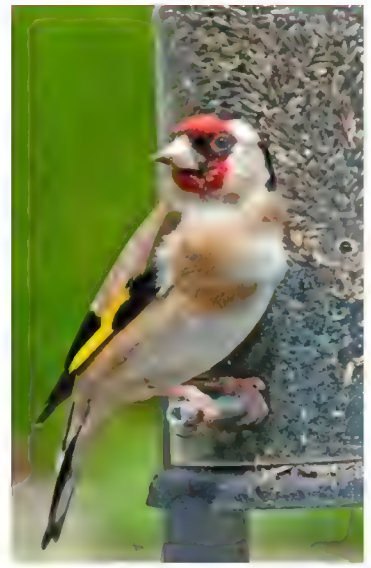
Not all birds eat nuts or seeds however. The goldcrest, for example, not always seen but a very common garden bird, is insectivorous, eating only small insects and spiders it finds with it's pin-like bill even in the winter months.

Many birds avert hunger by changing diet depending on the season or just by being very adaptable.

The crow family will eat pretty much anything – including other birds – and will even pick through droppings. Their strong digestive acid, as with other scavenging birds, allows them to digest a wide range of food without harm to themselves.

Robins like many species have a mixed diet, prefering invertebrates but will happily visit the birdfeeder and take to berry eating in the autumn.

You may have noticed that most birds feed their young insects, particularly caterpillars even though they may be seed or nut eaters. This provides easily digestible protein and fluid for development. Greenfinches are an exception to this rule, feeding the young primarily seeds which have been ground up in their gizzard and then lovingly regurgitated for their offspring.



A garden visitor: A goldfinch stops for seeds.

Picture by Dennis Brown

Many seed-eating birds also swallow grit to help this grinding process.

Like many of our resident species, most of our migratory visitors such as swifts, martins, swallows and the visiting warblers rely almost completely on a diet of insects for themselves and their offspring.

There has been an alarming decline in the invertebrate population over the past 25 years so maybe the best thing we can do if we would like to give our bird population a helping hand is to provide an insect-friendly environment.

This may be finding a way to incorporate more native species, yes the "W" word, in our gardens and community spaces. Watch out for Gulls when you get your chips though.

JL

Village Gardening

20 YEARS' VISITING VILLAGE GARDENS

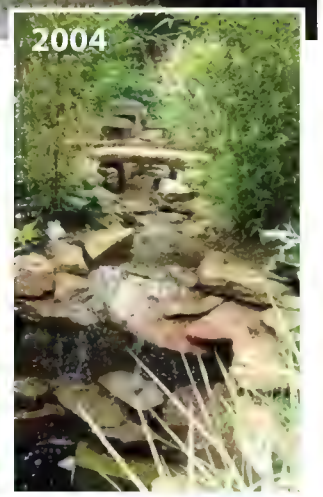
THE VILLAGE has been reporting on open gardens for twenty years now. Villagers have opened their gardens through community events and national schemes, offering visitors a chance to explore and gather inspiration for their own green spaces.

Hundreds of gardens have been opened since *The Village* first reported on them in 2004, mainly through the National Gardens Scheme. From small and colourful cottage gardens to environmentally friendly wildlife havens, expansive gardens with specialised areas to peaceful waterside spaces. As you'll see on these pages showing just a few of the gardens over the last two decades.

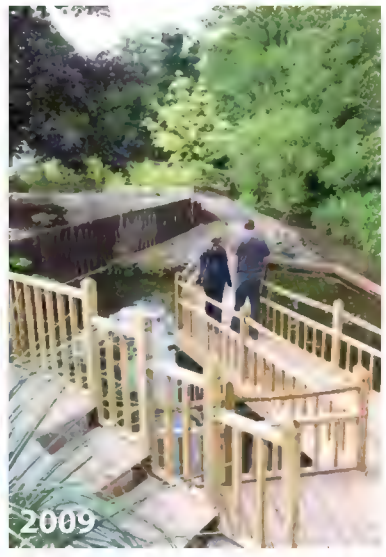
Exploring local gardens are a wonderful way to spend the day for the avid gardener, those who just like spending time outdoors or even just those who are interested (read: nosy) in what their neighbours' gardens look like.

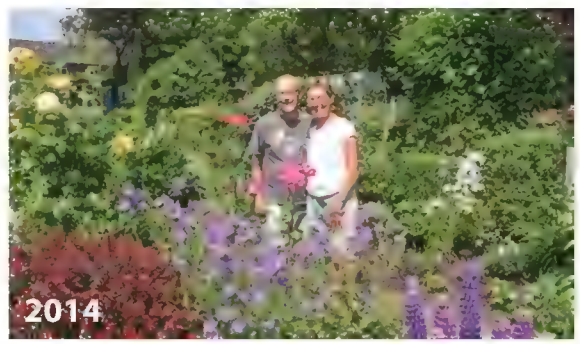
As *The Village* is delivered, Rowney Green will be opening gardens to visitors over 13–14 July. There are further open gardens through the National Garden Scheme in the area , visit www.findagarden.ngs.org.uk

A view over the gardens of The Moat House.



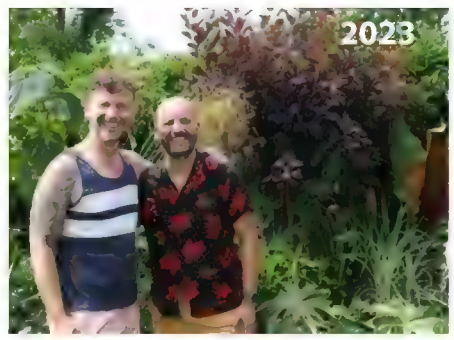
Clockwise from above: Barry Knee's Pump Cottage in Weatheroak; A rockery on Brace's Lane, Marlbrook; A bridge over the water at Rectory Cottage, Alvechurch; 'The Rose Man' John Adams in Withybed Green; *Sunnymede*, in Station Road, Alvechurch; and Lucy Cox in the garden of *The Mousehole* in Withybed.

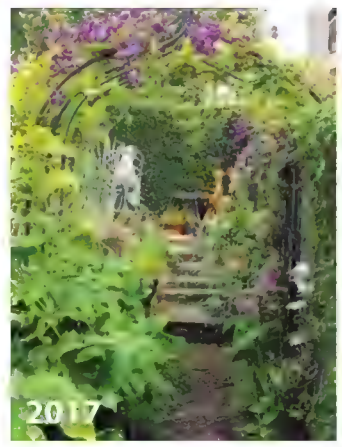




Ten years ago: Barry and Dianne Court and their colourful garden on Tanyard Lane, Alvechurch.

Withybed Green celebrate together: In the garden of The New Smithy.





Clockwise from top left: Jason Turner and Paul Emery in their modern, colourful Alvechurch garden; Climbers cover an archway in Braces Lane, Marlbrook; Visitors admire the gardens of Rear Cottages in Withybed Green; Steph and Chris Miall at The Shrubbery, Alvechurch; A narrowboat passes by Wharf Cottage's waterside garden; Elisabeth and Philip Aubrey in front of their colourful border in Alvechurch.

Village Gardening

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sales@villageonline.co.uk

Summer satellite show

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

SO, it's holiday time again when the days are warmer and the evenings can be spent just sitting and watching the skies.

The major planets are all still lurking around the other side of the Sun but can quite easily be seen. You just have to be up at about 4am when you'll find Saturn high in the south and Jupiter and Mars are fairly close together over in the east.

They get really close on the 14th of August and the Moon passes right in front of Saturn at 4.20am on the 21st, so that could be worth getting out of bed for.

Sunset is around 9pm and that is the perfect time to be looking out for satellites. Get comfy, perhaps with a little something to keep out the cold and just stare at the darkest bit of sky you can find.

You'll soon spot a "star" wandering across the sky, at about the same speed that an aircraft flies over but with no flashing lights or sound. As your eyes adjust, you'll see more and more and if you're with other people, it can start to become quite competitive.

If you are really keen, heavens-above.com will identify which satellite you are seeing, usually just a spent rocket, easily seen because they are fairly large and painted white.

By far the brightest object in low Earth orbit is the International Space Station. So big that you would struggle to fit it on a football pitch and weighing more than 400 tons, it zooms around the world at 17,000 miles per hour at a height of 200 miles.

"Heavens Above" is perfect for finding the ISS, showing its track across the sky and a map showing its track over the ground. It's amazing to discover that it can be seen even when it is over northern Spain.

Above: A long exposure shot of the Perseids.
Below: The ISS from space shuttle *Endeavour*. *Images courtesy of NASA.*

As the skies get properly dark, you might begin to see "shooting stars" or meteors. These are mere specks of dust or tiny particles either left over from the formation of the Solar System or part of the trail of debris left behind by a comet as it approaches the Sun.

The reason these minute bits of space rubbish can produce such a bright display is because of their enormous speed.

Earth is travelling through space at many hundreds of thousands of miles per hour so anything travelling in the opposite direction collides with our atmosphere with huge force, compressing the air molecules in front of it.

As you may know if you have ever pumped up a bicycle tyre, when you compress air it gets warm. These particles get so hot they burn up and produce the bright streaks we see. Occasionally a large lump gets through to the ground as a meteorite but these are relatively rare.

July and August are particularly good for meteor spotting as there are three meteor showers but the peak is around the 12th August. This is the middle of the Perseid shower so the trails will appear to come from Perseus over in the northern sky but of course, they can be seen all over the sky.

So get those deck chairs out and start looking.

EVENTS

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA will re-start at 7.30pm on 5th October at St Laurence Church Alvechuch. The first concert in the 2024/25 season will be *EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED* an exciting programme to challenge expectations including: Pachelbel's 'Gigue' (the partner to the famous 'Canon'): Rossini's effervescent 'String Sonata No. 5' and Glazunov's 'Saxophone Concerto in E flat'. www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA invite you to save the date of their Autumn Concert, which will be on 24th November 2024 in the same venue.

ST LAURENCE CHURCH AND THE ARK will be hosting their Heritage Day on Saturday 14 September between 10am – 4pm. There will be tours of the church and churchyard, local stalls, games and presentations from local groups. A full programme of activities will be available soon.

MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. New members are always welcome. For more information or to join or book them, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They are in the Village Hall on 1 & 15 July and at other locations until they break for summer on 22 July.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights. On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm. For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm. For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646. The programme is subject to change if the circumstances dictate.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, rehearse at St. John's Church, Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more.
Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk. They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. They meet on Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs FREE weekly string orchestra, concert band and beginner group Lift Off! sessions for young musicians. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at The Orchards School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm Individual instrumental lessons are also provided at the centre. For info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall).
They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley

continues overleaf

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

EXHIBITION:
JACK VETTRIANO IN ALVECHURCH?

... WELL, NOT QUITE! But there will be some pictures representing Vettriano's style on display at an exhibition of works by Pam's Art Group, who ususally meet in Alvechurch Village Hall on Thursdays *writes Dave Morgan*.

The exhibitions runs from Thursday July 25th to Saturday 27th. The competition theme also includes Philosophical style paintings so there will be an eclectic display at the exhibition.

Sponsored by Kamal Khan, of Spring View Care Limited, many of the winning pictures now deck the walls of his nursing homes in Alvechurch and Bromsgrove. His competitions have inspired many of the artists who attend the classes, led by Pam McGregor, to try something new, with some very positive results.

In addition to the competition entries there will also be about 100 other pictures on display, many produced during the last year and include paintings based on specific subjects set by Pam, like "Shade and Shadows" using acrylics and "Facades". Pam also challenged the artists to think outside of the box, including creating collages on the theme "Old and New" and "Recycled" using paper pulp to create 3D art.

Art teacher Pam commented: "We always appreciate the support we get from our sponsors who challenge the members to use their art skills to produce a painting in a style they may not have tried before. The diversity of styles means there will be something for everyone who visits the exhibition."

The exhibition will be open in the Alvechurch Village Hall from 10am, closing at 6pm on Thursday and Friday and 5pm on Saturday. There will be refreshments available each day and extra craft stands on Saturday.

Entry to the exhibition is free, and many of the pictures on display will be available at very reasonable prices, so there is always a chance of picking up a unique piece of original art by the next Jack Vettriano!

for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or r.g.henley@btinternet.com

BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY meets in the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, on Mondays from 7.45 - 9.45pm.
The choir sings a range of music throughout the year, performing at least three concerts. New singers are always welcome and there is no need to audition! For more information, see barntgreen-choralsociety.org or facebook.com/barntgreen-choralsociety.

DANCING

JAZZ HEELS CLASS FOR ADULTS. A new class held on Tuesdays 5:45-6:30pm at Hopwood Village Hall. For more info contact Amy on 07979408997.

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/ Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements (no Facebook account needed).

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Please check first by emailing alvechurchfrenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group!
Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

The society will not be holding their usual monthly meeting at the Village Hall on the 2nd Thursday in July but would like to remind everyone that the Main Show will be taking place on Saturday 31st August. This will be the 80th Annual Flower and Produce Show and prizes will be presented by Professor Sir Keith Porter, former civilian lead for the care of injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan which will make this a very special show. The Schedule is available at Alvechurch Library, The Calling Oak and at www.rowneygreenhorticultural.co.uk. Please take a look and decide how many entries you would like to enter and therefore make this 80th Annual Flower and Produce Show even more special. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997 amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall, Bromsgrove. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For further details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

LINEDANCE CLASS, every Thursday between 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village.Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

NEW SALSA dance classes, every Thursday at the Alvechurch Inn, B48 7LD. Doors open at 6pm. Beginners classes at 7pm, with the main class at 8pm. All classes are £9 each or both classes for £15. Come on your own or with friends. Contact 07779686679.

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case Friday has to change because of commitments in the village) from 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: david-rowe876@btinternet.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS invite you to their film screenings. Admission is free however donations are welcome. Full details can be found at The Meeting House, 6 Sandhills Rd, Barnt Green.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute.
The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. Info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact paul_and_carrol@live.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time. They are currently taking a summer break and restart their programme of events on September 18th.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £2 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Maureen Frowley on 0121 445 0880.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch welcomes you to its monthly meetings on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for more: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers providing a range of support - from friendship and practical help - for all refugees and asylum seekers moving into the district. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious beliefs, and new volunteers are always needed. More info at brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group specifically offers respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility.
Tea and biscuits/cake provided – no charge. Contact Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, book in advance www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk.

RE-ENGAGE aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm.
For more info www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heartspeakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmastersheartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Want to know more? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

BRIDGE CLUBS JOIN FOR A BIG DEAL

THE CARD GAME of bridge has a strong social element (as well as being a competitive game). Nowhere is this stronger than in the "café bridge" format of the game, in which players move between cafes or pubs, playing a few hands in each. Following interruption due to Covid-19, Cafe Bridge resumed to this area last year, raising over £1,250 for charity.

This year, a festival of bridge will be running across the whole country in September and the Barnt Green event will form a part of that festival.

For the first time, Bromsgrove Bridge Club, the organisers of the Barnt Green Cafe Bridge event, will be joining forces with the two Barnt Green bridge clubs: the Barnt Green Bridge Club and the Monday Bridge Club, in order to make the event is even more successful than last year.

The festival of bridge, called "Bridge, It's a Big Deal", is raising money for Cancer Research UK.

In addition to raising money, the clubs will be providing information about where to play bridge, and learn to play, locally and a one-day "Introduction to Bridge" course will be run in November for those wishing to give the game a try.

Richard Jephcott, who lives in Barnt Green, said: "The event in Barnt Green has been popular for many years now and it is particularly pleasing that it brings the community together in so many ways. Local businesses support the raffle with some great prizes and, as well as local players, we have visitors from other parts of the country coming along and enjoying themselves. Cancer Research is so important and it is very pleasing for the bridge community to be able to support it."

Information about *Bridge, It's a Big Deal*, can be found at: www.ebu.co.uk/festival and details of the Barnt Green event, to be held on Thursday 12th September, will be available soon.

More information can be obtained by emailing Richard at: richardjephcott@outsideinsight.co.uk

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 2nd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at Burcot Grange. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. or email contact@wbdcs.org.uk. Non-members are welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB will not meet in August meeting this year, so the next meeting will be on 11 September – so have a wonderful

continues overleaf

summer with, hopefully, lots of sunshine to enjoy. More information from Lis on 445 3895 or Janet on 447 7870.

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old ones (with a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am-12pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info 0121 445 1425.

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. Please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides opportunities for retired and semi retired men to meet socially. A members meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Wednesday monthly 10am until 12pm, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. Other regular activities include monthly walks, lunches including partners, snooker–, social outings and IT. For more info visit www.bromsgrove1982probus.weebly.com or contact Martin on 07717 150136.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955.

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

Bromsgrove & District AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets every Friday evening from 7.30pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. The club is open to anyone with an interest in Amateur Radio. More details from the secretary Alan on 07886 000052 or secretary@bromsgroveradioclub.co.uk

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

Are you feeling misunderstood but you're unsure why? You're not alone. Find guidance, understanding and support in an inclusive community. Join the "ALVECHURCH INCLUSIVE NETWORK" group on Facebook!

DO YOU WANT TO DELIVER *THE VILLAGE*?

Around this time of year some of our deliverers are getting ready to move on to university or jobs. If you are aged over 13 and would like to deliver ***The Village***, please email your name, age and where you live to: info@villageonline.co.uk

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

BARNT GREEN WATERS LIMITED are hosting a Club Open Day at Upper Bittell on Saturday 11th May 11am to 4pm for those who may be interested in becoming members of the either the Fishing Club or Sailing Club, or to enjoy the natural surroundings of the estate. Full details about the Open Day can be seen on pages 28-29.

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com. They are currently taking a break for summer will and restart walks in September; details to follow.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Contact: barntgreenfishingclub@gmail.com or Facebook @Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). Really friendly no-pressure club. New members always welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking.
The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

MEDITATION CLASSES for Everyone. Come and try a KIND approach to Meditation and experience for yourself the revitalising power of a relaxed, calm, clear mind, whether beginner or experienced practitioner. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, online or a mixture. REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER, SLEEP BETTER. To join us for a trail contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F Sally My Yoga Mind

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailing-barntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. For information contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue—classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church. Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park. Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area. Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins). Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established. Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 1–3pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Don on 01527 759 318.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES PILATES with Steff Affleck (Rowney Green) Mat classes, apparatus (reformer/ tower / barrels etc.) 1:1 and duets. Irrespective of age, gender, health or fitness we could all benefit from understanding more about how to keep moving well. Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, using apparatus he invented, enables you to challenge what is strong, build what is weaker, exploring how you can balance the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Graduate of Pilates Professional Advanced Teacher Training; teaching Pilates for 17 years. Call 07759590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BIODIVERSITY WALKS

Mary Green's next biodiversity walk is on Wednesday 24 July at 10.30am – just one this time. It's a slow easy walk to look at areas of good habitat for wildlife around Alvechurch. This one will be through fields which may have uneven ground. Meet outside The Crown Inn, Withybed Green. The walk takes about two hours. No need to book: just turn up. For more information contact alvbiodiv@gmail.com

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barnt-greensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

ACTIVE SENIORS Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Village Hall, run by Bromsgrove council on Fridays starting 9.15am, £5 per class. Contact g.peart@hotmail.co.uk or call on 07828 515344 for info.

YOGA for Every-Body. Come and try a fresh approach to Yoga, that works with your body rather than against it. A slow-paced, yet powerful Yoga for EveryBody, whether beginner or experienced, flexible or wishing you were. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, Blackwell First School, online or a mixture. MOVE BETTER, BE CALMER, FEEL GREAT! To trial a class, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Robert Hawkesford (Bob) on 07788856642 or email rhawkesford59@gmail.com

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Open to all. Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescyclingclub.co.uk or phone Sheila Evans on 07779 530017.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

6 WEEK MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS COURSES to help you relax, find inner peace, and elevate your life. Join them on Wednesday evenings at The Friends Meeting House in Barnt Green or online whenever it suits you. Suitable for everyone! Enrol in the upcoming courses and discover how they've been changing lives at www.MeditationWithCoz.com or contact Coz at 07770067349. Follow on Facebook/Instagram: @MeditationWithCoz.

BARNT GREEN CHUGGERS & CHAINGANG provide run & cycling sessions for mixed abilities, those wanting to stay in shape plus those wishing to improve their running, cycling & fitness all in a social & recreational environment. Club Sessions - Chuggers (run) Monday & Wednesday 7pm and Chaingang (cycling) Wednesday 7pm & Saturday 9am all from Barnt Green Sports Club. For more info or to arrange a trial session please contact kategallimore@googlemail.com

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES working on mobility, strength, flexibility and balance. Classes are very welcoming and inclusive and are held on: Wednesday's 1.30-2.30 at St Stephens Church Hall, Rednal and Thursdays 10am-11am Blackwell Community Hall, Blackwell. The cost is £5 per class. For information call Lorraine 07866877881

LEGS, BUMS AND TUMS every Thursday morning at The Parish Centre at 9.15am at £6 per class. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY will not be holding their usual monthly meeting at the Village Hall on the 2nd Thursday in July but would like to remind everyone that the Main Show will be taking place on Saturday 31st August.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in

continues overleaf

Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor & dip in & out. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle and you may be lucky and take one home. Further information on 07843758489 .

SOLIHULL & District Orchid Society meets on the 1st Sat each month at St George & St Teresa's Parish Centre, Station Road, Dorridge B39 8EZ. New members and visitors welcome. For information call 01926 747822 or email kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com. visit www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request."
For details and more information contact marygreen5005@gmail.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group which meets in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, catering for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. Places are available. For further information telephone: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroftarts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members always welcome. And don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time at the new Cofton Village hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise.
All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide Headquarters in Blackwell Road just beyond the Barnt Green Social Club. They run Tuesday morning and afternoon sessions with visiting tutors at 2 - 3 week intervals. Interested artists of all abilities are welcome. Please phone Jackie on 0121 445 4745 for details.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is an art course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

FORGE MILL CREATIVE TEXTILE GROUP are a friendly group of enthusiastic local stitchers, both experienced and beginners. They meet on Friday mornings at Beoley Village Hall. They are a leisure learning and development group exploring various techniques and media to create textiles artwork. Please contact Lynda on 0121 445 3212 or Janet on 0121 445 4335 for more information.

A SINGING SUCCESS

BARNT GREEN Choral Society has now completed an outstanding 2023/2024 season. Under the skilful baton of Bromsgrove's own musical maestro, Steve Cowperthwaite, the choir now comprises 55 singers and has reached impressive new levels of excellence and musicality.

The society joined other Midland choirs to form a massed chorus in the autumn, and sang a charity concert in Birmingham to raise money for the musical education of under-privileged children.

The autumn concluded with the society's own Christmas Family Concert. A happy occasion with a full attendance singing a wide range of carols and festive favourites.

The spring term saw the society's major concert performance of Mozart's *Requiem* together with two Bach cantatas, and were accompanied by a 30-piece orchestra. The four soloists, including David Coulson as Bass, sang impressively.

This summer, the choir will deliver the opening concert at the Bromsgrove Music Festival, singing pieces from musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber and others.

The choir is always interested in seeking new members, and if you are interested you can email them at info@barntgreenchoralsociety.org. You don't need to have experience of choral singing or be able to read music.

They meet on Monday evenings (7.45pm -9.45pm) September to June at the Parish Centre, Barnt Green, B45 8NR. You can go along for a few sessions to get the feel of things before deciding if you want to join.

Our September issue is an

EDUCATION SPECIAL

Want to feature your business? Email fran@villageonline.co.uk for more information.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Based at Barnt Green Sports Club, Margesson Drive, B45 8LR. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 18 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Thursdays in Finstall (other days/ venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and carers) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, or contact 0121 445 1425 clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs popular antenatal and postnatal courses to grow your knowledge and your network, allowing you to feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make vital connections and life-long friends in your community. Held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesdays. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or get in touch via Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10am. Contact dancingpointe@outlook.com for further details.

STAY & PLAY for under 5s and their carers running each Thursday from 9:30-11:30am during term time at Barnt Green Baptist Church, Bittel Road. Just pop along for play, singing & story time. Email familypastoral@bgb.org.uk

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcrosswi.org or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7pm on the second Tuesday every month between April and November, and at 12pm December to March, at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB).
More information from Helen Spence (01527 822622)or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Sheila Nunnerley 07465 439646.

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more information contact Marian Clemons on 07586354826 or follow them on Facebook: Hillside WI at Alvechurch

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susanbarratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire. Call 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please call 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/ clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

ROWNEY GREEN VILLAGE HALL has a large hall, with stage and sprung floor (ideal for dance and exercise) and two smaller rooms. Available for one off or regular hire, ample parking. Email: admin@rowneygreenvillagehall.org

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY HALL is available for groups, functions and parties. The large hall is complemented by a new kitchen and a grassed area. Details at blackwellcommunityhall.co.uk.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL has a wide range of facilities, including a modern kitchen, bar, PA system, projector and screen, skittles alley and a large car park with disabled access to the hall. To book your event, meeting, party or celebration for up to 100 people, please contact Richard on 01527 66646.

OUR LADY'S PARISH CENTRE in Rednal is available for hire for clubs, groups, classes, private parties etc Large hall with kitchen and car park. Enquiries to olhallbooking@gmail.com or 0121 453 3452.

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

If you have a group or an event that you would like to feature in the next What's On section, the deadline for submissions for the September issue of *TheVillage* is 5 August 2024.
Please email: info@villageonline.co.uk

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Until 31.8.24